

Leadership for Change Queensland Fire & Rescue Authority

AUSTRALIA

Executive Development

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The Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority (QFRA) as renamed after the analysis of the Queensland Fire Service (QFS) subsequent to the review conducted by the business consultancy of Lyn Staib Australia. The new organization replaced its management through a closed spill of positions. The new team of executives needed to reflect the philosophy for a business focus and improved staff relations, fostering a learning organization into the preferred future.

This analysis identified a gap between the skills needed to embrace the significant challenges ahead taking this organization into the future and the skills currently identified in the team. The purpose of the paper was to establish a blueprint for a leadership development program. The action research followed the organizational analysis which also identified that leadership for the organisation was paramount to organizational transition. The question to be answered, was, ‘what was the leadership objectives resulting from the QFRA analysis? ; where was best-practice and fit for the QFRA leadership development? ; how was the program to be delivered and achieve accreditation with an educational institution?

Assessment of the team identified a priority list of personal issues to be targeted for development. The team approach would be used for these initiatives of personnel development and that this program would be utilized into the wider management development programs for other staff. The process was also to utilize the findings of the staib report. This would also include the personal evaluation aspect through the ‘Leadership Practices Inventory’ and the ‘Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument’. This was to assist in raising awareness of the individuals into personal disciplines and program commitment. Inclusive would be a book list, executive newsletters, retreats, formal studies,

and development sessions with professional consultants.

The result of the research identifies the elements to be included in the program and that Deakin University Australia would be partnering the QFRA in the development of its executive team. Formal accreditation would follow and the development program would be a focus of the organisation and would include some formal studies at the conclusion of contractual period of the executives.

Introduction

The fire service in Queensland has had a varied history. As a result of a Government initiated review into the organization, the structure was replaced with a flatter arrangement to facilitate improved communication (reduce filtering), to sponsor empowerment and to target closer staff relations. The management was faltering with decision and control and staff were frustrated with lack of direction. The industrial process was bogged down and issues for reform, had been three years without progress. The proposed industrial reforms and low morale led to industrial disputation, grievances and industrial action against the management and the government. The staff subsequently marched on the 'Houses of Parliament', and progress in negotiations was stalled and communications had failed. Morale was declining and sick leave had increased to 12 and 20 percent and even went as high as 27 percent in one quarter of the state and frequently reached above this.

The review into the fire services (February 1996) referred to as the "Staib Report", identified a number of serious issues relating to the organization and there was doubt in its recovery with the present management structure. The doubt related to the management and its capacity to address the failing staff relations and decline in the morale. It was clearly a major issue and creating an environment for transition was going to be a significant and complex problem. Complicated as it was there was a need for teasing out of the issues for this paper. *The problem was that management did not have the leadership skills needed to embrace the significant challenges ahead in order to address this issue of organizational transition. There was no executive development program to meet the identified lack of skill.* Where were these leadership skills going to come from? Where was it to start, in order to find the level of leadership and management capacity?

Spilling the management of the organization was undertaken in an attempt to establish a capacity for reform and to birth a culture for renewal. The new management team was selected from the ranks of the existing organization to demonstrate loyalty (significantly lacking in the past). While this may replace one cultural aspect, it certainly does not resolve the issue of leadership skills and was only going to establish a jumping off point. *The purpose of the project is to establish a leadership development program with the new team.* The program was to address the issues of leadership and reflect the individual needs. Clearly there had been identified a need for behavioral change to reflect a greater capacity for leadership which would match the transitional needs of the organization. Given this point in the history of the organization and the overall culture, some specific issues had been identified needing the priority and to be given a greater focus.

An analysis of the organization was achieved through the “Staib Review”. Leadership was one of the issues identified. The newly appointed team would now have to reflect the needed leadership in order to bring about the proposed organizational reforms. The method of research (action) was on a broad consultative approach through interviews conducted with slices of the organization at all levels including the agencies which interfaced with the organization through business and common interest. This information was the foundation of the “Staib Report” findings which the writer was the operational advisor with the business consultancy, Lyn Staib Australia. The new organization included in it’s framework with each of the new executive team the use of the ‘Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI)’ and the ‘Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI)’. Included was the evaluation of the various educational institutional programs available through invitation to offer and subsequent panel evaluation of the finalists.

The material developed and the concept identified, led to the creation of a leadership program

specifically developed for the new team of executives which were going to lead the organization through the proposed reforms identified in the 'Staib Report'.

The questions which needed to be answered were: -

- *What were the leadership objectives resulting from the QFRA analysis?*
- *Where were the best-practice and fit for the QFRA leadership development?*
- *How was the program to be delivered and achieve accreditation with an educational institution?*

The objective was to establish a "Leadership Development" program for the executive team which would be a best fit for busy schedules and facilitate accreditation towards recognized credentials.

Background and Significance

The fire service industry in Queensland (Australia), has had a varied history. In perspective it would be useful at this point to give a brief outline of the organization. The state of Queensland (east coast of Australia) has a land mass of approximately one million square kilometers and a population of approximately three and a half million people. The capital city of Brisbane is located in the south eastern corner of the state and has the largest population of one and a quarter million. The state has provincial towns and cities mainly on the east coast with varying size of communities throughout the state.

The fire service developed in the late 1800's on a volunteer base and progressed to the present day with a contingent of volunteers (50,000), auxiliary firefighters (permanent casual, 2000) and permanent or career staff (2000). The management structure was hierarchical and based on individual Fire Brigade Boards having responsibility for the town or local community. This resulted in an unwieldy structure of eighty-one (81) 'Boards' with a standards framework set by the State Fire Service Council (government appointed body, 1976) which had an advisory capacity and no regulatory power.

In 1985 the state restructured the funding of the fire services from a levy on insurance premiums to a levy or tax on rateable (land tax) properties and is currently ninety-six dollars forty cents (\$96.40 Aus. for 1997) on an urban improved domestic property. This proposed to bring an equity to the funding of fire services in Queensland. This levy is collected by local government during the rateable period and transferred to the fire service trust accounts five times per year.

In 1990 the government restructured the fire services from the board system to a state public service system managed through a 'Bureau'. This again proved impractical as no power was given to the Director of the bureau and soon was replaced with the Departmental structure under the

Queensland Emergency Services. This public service system also was identified as having contributed to organizational instability and decline. The government, when it came to power in the latter part of 1995 ordered a review of the fire services in Queensland. The review was directed and focused on the management structure, morale and industrial relations. The subsequent “Staib Report”, proposed to flatten the structure and replace the management through a closed spill of positions and foster empowerment of the staff, embrace wider consultation, and create a partnership with the stake holders and the community.

The historical ethos of the fire services fostered a belief that only operational issues were the key to success. It proposed that managerial and leadership skills were inherent in the officer. This has often been observed to be untrue and without foundation. The organization was about to go through another significant reform. Leadership was identified as one of the keys to addressing the change process for the Fire Service, “it is now apparent that much mending of bridges is required and for some considerable time staff and management must concentrate on developing effective working relationships and facilitating the participation by staff at all levels of the Queensland Fire Service in decision making processes in the future” (Staib, 1996, pg194). Creating an environment for transition was paramount. This large organization (4000, in Australian standards), had major communication problems and it was lacking managerial skill. The transition would be difficult unless a champion of the vision could capture a team approach which embraced and sponsored the cause. The leadership was undetermined at this stage. Identifying the much needed leadership style would also be a principal factor to progress. Unless there was a major shift in the management there was little hope of organizational reform. What this paper proposes, is to identify a framework and the components of the leadership development program for the organizations’ executive team.

Literature Review

The “Staib Report”, an evaluation of the fire service in Queensland gave a damning reflection of the culture and the management style, (Staib Report, 1996, pp.86-87), “the prevailing management style is traditionally referred to as ‘paramilitary’ which at one end of the continuum deteriorates into ‘bully-boy’ behavior, intimidation, harassment and victimization, and at the other end is a more balanced but nevertheless directive style”. The communication channels are poor, (Staib Report, 1996, p87), “there is little opportunity for consultation, employee participation in decision making, the encouragement of innovation, and for the recognition of employee contribution towards business success”. Identifying these major issues asks more questions than can be answered in this paper but it certainly recognises that the organization lacked significant leadership. The outcome of the review into the Queensland Fire Service (1996) also identified the type of management and leadership style needed to assist the transition for the organization. It proposes to develop a management culture which encouraged the development and implementation of new and innovative approaches to service delivery. It proposes to foster an ethos which encouraged individual contribution including group participation in the development of ideas for a broader implementation and a much wider use of focus groups. The report continued with an outline of the characteristics of a good manager.

In their book, “The Leadership Challenge”, (Kouzes, Posner, 1995.) they describe the outcomes of their research and reflect on five fundamental practices of exemplary leadership. “As we looked deeper into the dynamic process of leadership, through case analysis and survey questionnaires, we uncovered five fundamental practices that enable leaders to get extraordinary things done. The

individual stories of how ordinary people got extraordinary things done brought the leadership model to life for us". Finding this model related the style of leadership identified in the analysis of the organization, it was encouraging to see such a simple model reflecting our needs which have been identified at this time. The five issues were, 'Challenging the Process', 'Inspired a Shared Vision', 'Enable Others to Act', 'Model the Way' and 'Encourage the Heart'. Given the state of the QFRA, this model was adopted as one of the basis for the organizational focus for leadership development in the executive team. Challenging the process relates to looked for innovation and changes to the status quo, to pioneering the way and stepping out into the unknown. Inspiring the vision embraces the collective good of a preferred future for the QFRA. Empowerment, enables others to act and embraces the 'we' ethos for the organization. The 'example of the leadership' in 'demonstration' and 'modeling the way' gives validation and purpose to the standards set through the verbiage of the vision. QFRA emphasizes the modeling of its leadership and fosters continuous individual improvement as it augments in the nature of the organization. There is to be linkage to the emotional aspect of the vision and inspiration to carry on and uplift the spirit, drawing people forward into the future. The fundamentals needed for transition of the QFRA can be supported by this model and the argument for change is inherent in the findings of the organizational analysis.

In their book 'Beyond the Boundaries', Stace and Dunphy (1996), explore leading and re-creating the successful enterprise. The research identifies the Dunphy- Stace matrix for organizational and corporate change. The matrix relates the 'scale of change' and the 'style of change management'. Identifying fine-tuning, incremental adjustment, modular transformation through to corporate transformation, with a style described as collaborative, consultative, directive to coercive, the matrix

distinguishes the style appropriate to the desired shift in the organizational change. This matrix applied to an organization would identify four categories of change. The four being, 'developmental transition', 'task-focused transition', 'charismatic transformations' and 'turnarounds', a fifth category, 'taylorism', shown on the matrix, indicated that there was an avoidance of change. The QFRA evaluation and the utilization of the Dunphy-Stace model, indicated a charismatic transformation (inspirational change) was needed followed by a shift to 'developmental transition' within the medium term. This application of this matrix gave clear indications where would the best shift come from, provided that the applied leadership was consistent. "The executive, exercising a charismatic style of leadership, engages the intellectual, emotional and behavioral commitment of staff to a radically new view of the organization", (Stace, Dunphy, p101, 1996). Although there is a desire to match transformational skills with the new executives it was clear the 'Executive Development Program' was going to have to facilitate the development of the team to match the needs identified for this change. The book outlines the links between the various approaches to change and suitable leadership styles. This proved invaluable in developing the focus in the executive developmental program.

Procedures

Organizational analysis resulted from the evaluation of the Queensland Fire Service through the consultancy 'Lyn Staib Australia', of which the writer played the lead role as the operational advisor to Lyn Staib. The subsequent report identified organizational areas needing reform. The report known as the 'Staib Report' established its findings through a thorough internal and external consultative process. Interviews with slices of the organization were conducted with senior executive staff, senior regional staff, firefighters and officers across the state in a series of open and closed forums in each region. The forums allowed staff to relay concerns. These matters along with the contents of the many written submissions were documented and validated through cross checking with other functional areas of the organization. The team also conducted interviews with stakeholders external to the organization. The resultant outcome renamed the organization the 'Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority' (QFRA), this was to embrace the broader aspect of service delivery in 'rescue', and resolved as one of its recommendations to replace the management through a closed spill of positions. The recommendations were supported and confirmed by the staff through a second round of consultations with slices of the organization. The report documented and identified a number of the current needs and transitional requirements for the organization.

The change in management through the subsequent spill of positions resulted in a new team of executive officers, from the Chief Commissioner (CEO) and nine (9) Regional Commissioners (see appendix A). The selection criteria (see appendix B) drew from the organization those people with high people skills and the broader skills reflective of the needs for the new QFRA. The evaluation of this staff

identified the focus of the executive development program. As part of the evaluation each member participated in a 'Herrmann Brain Dominance Profile', this gave an insight into the individual and team development needs including strengths of the individual and the group. This also facilitated a comparison with the profile across Australia and allowed benchmarks with Australian management. "Brain Dominance Theory is based on individuals being more influenced by nurture than by nature. This means that to a certain extent, that who we are and our brain dominance is based on what has happened to us and tends to be environmentally acquired", (Herrmann, Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument, (HBDI), 1997). The collective result reflected that the team was identified as being symmetry and whole brain dominant, this gave an encouraging profile and indicated that the collective team input to decision making should result in balanced outcomes. (see appendix C)

Following this aspect of the evaluation there was a 'Leadership Practices Inventory' (LPI), (Kouzes & Posner, 1993) included on each of the executives. This instrument is used to provide a 360° information on the leadership practices of the individual from their work colleagues. This identifies the areas which are regarded by the colleagues as being strengths and weaknesses in their leadership profile. Inclusive into the executive development program, this information adds another dynamic to the guiding behavioral modification process, being identified for the individual.

In order to facilitate achievement through 'Action Learning' and a positive disposition it was important that each individual takes on the responsibility for a project which will enhance the progress and give value adding to the organization and it's reform needs. The theme chosen by executives will each have a high level project which they will undertake. The progress will depend on the commitment they can inspire into others and negotiate resources into the specific projects' development. Examples of

the themes' were commercial development; a major shift in service delivery to include Urban Search and Rescue (USAR), and development of business units in functional areas of the organization such as the pumper and apparatus maintenance workshops.

A framework was developed with these areas identified as being important to the transition requirements of the organization, including consultation with the new executives and senior human resource management staff and with the undertaking with wider views sought from management consultants and agencies involved in executive development. (see appendix D)

The outcome was a framework based on input from the stakeholders and reflected a developmental program tailor-made for the new staff. Senior human resource management staff would participate in the program as well, this was to gauge the benefits and outcomes, but primarily to quality check and evaluate the program from within and to determine the progressive delivery and milestones.

Finally, expressions of interest were called from universities across Australia for a partnership in this leadership development program. The framework was provided and each participant prepared a written submission for short listing. The respondent universities were short listed and Bond University, (Queensland) and Deakin Australia University (Victoria) were asked to provide a three hour presentation on the best practice and fit for the program and how it would propose to accredited our developmental activities and program content into a 'masters program' with full accreditation for the participants of the QFRA. (see appendix E)

Deakin Australia University provided the most valued program with the flexibility for busy executives. They also provided specific courses which would meet the needs of the organization which included a client manager, facilitating the executives progress throughout the program. The overall program is to

match the five (5) year employment contract of the executives and allow formal credentials at the conclusion of the developmental and contractual period.

DEFINITION of TERMS

QFS Queensland Fire Service: the organization which was reviewed in February 1996 and renamed the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority in February 1997.

QFRA Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority: the renamed state organization in Queensland , Australia, a staff compliment of 4000 urban firefighters and 50000 rural volunteers.

Results

The findings of the 'Staib Evaluation' identified the widening gap between the management practices of the senior management and that which would be needed for the transition of the organization. Some extracts are provided only (see appendix F), as the final report was too comprehensive to include all of the material. Broadly it found the management needed to refined it skills, develop leadership and embrace a contemporary ethos throughout its management structure and decision making processes. It was to embrace consultative mechanisms and allow wider staff input to broaden the participative arrangements with staff and facilitate ownership. The organization should foster a philosophy of respect and dignity for staff, improving relations at all levels. Industrial relations, between the management, staff and unions must embrace a partnership approach to progress organizational and industrial reforms. The organization is to restructure and replace its management through a closed spill of positions to facilitate a physiological and cultural shift in the physic of the management as a foundational aspect for the organisational reform.

The findings of the 'Herrmann Brain Dominance Profile', (on each of the new executives) provided a unique instrument for evaluation of the group. It established a basis for progressing towards an informed and developed interaction within the group and to provide some insight into behavior both corporately and individually. The writers profile (2-2-1-1) reflected a strength in the creative, holistic and synthesizing aspects and this broadened into the interpersonal, emotional and spiritual aspects indicated through the instrument. This indicated a strength with facilitating, teaching and indicative for the support for entrepreneurial behavior. The comparison, (see table 01) of the group, averaged in a profile

of (1-1-1-1) and indicated that this profile occurs in only 3% of the population and would reflect a well integrated person or as in this case a well integrated group. This profile would facilitate chief executives, executives with multi-functional responsibilities and chairperson of the board. The new teams profile of '1-1-1-1' shows a well integrated group for senior executive positions. It should be noted that the profile of this team was post appointment to the senior positions. (see appendix G)

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Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument, Liner Continuum for the QFRA

Quadrant Scores

Adjective Pairs

Mode Scores%

Team	Profile	a	B	C	D	a	B	C	D	Lt	Rt	Cr	Lm
Commissioner 001	2211	39	65	107	95	2	3	12	7	34	66	44	56
Commissioner 002	1211	71	42	86	104	3	3	10	8	37	63	58	42
Commissioner 003	2111	65	89	80	78	3	7	5	9	49	51	46	54
Commissioner 004	1111	72	92	77	72	5	6	6	7	52	48	46	54
Commissioner 005	1221	95	57	48	90	6	4	6	8	52	48	64	36
Commissioner 006	1121	83	74	42	89	6	8	3	7	55	45	60	40
Commissioner 007	1121	86	83	42	98	7	7	4	6	55	45	60	40
Commissioner 008	1122	98	80	36	62	7	7	6	4	64	36	58	42
Commissioner 009	1122	86	92	67	38	7	8	7	2	65	35	45	55
Chief Commissioner	2211	54	69	95	86	5	4	9	6	38	62	48	52
AVERAGES	1111	75	74	68	81	5.1	5.7	6.8	6.4	50	50	53	47

Table 01

Consolidation of the data with an interpretation by the HBDI agency was provided for each participant. The profile gave a broad interpretation and included key descriptors, work elements,

best/worst subjects, education, occupation, hobbies, handedness, language center, energy level, motion sickness, introvert/extrovert, adjective pairs and finally the profile scores.

(see appendix H).

The Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI), (Kouzes, Posner, 1993) collocated individual data from questionnaires through a 360⁰ evaluation. The questionnaire is designed to find your self assessment and to compare the response from your colleagues in a 360⁰ evaluation. The matrix revolves around the five (5) fundamental practices of exemplary leadership mentioned earlier. This instrument provides individual personal information. The result outlined here in this appendix H is only that of the writer. It found that personal responses can be somewhat different to those of the colleagues. It was usually found that the candidate had a tendency to understate the scores. In comparison with the colleagues scores, there is usually a strong indication in the areas where there could be improvement. This instrument indicated a high profile in all of the categories of ‘challenging’, ‘inspiring’, ‘enabling’, ‘modeling’, ‘encouraging’. As each of the indicators were included in the evaluation a clear picture began to emerge. The program would target individual development needs meshing with the personal objective of the ‘action plan’ and in the broader sense of the overall program. The instrument gave clear ideas which each individual could undertake to improve and target behavior modification in order to increase effectiveness in the leadership practices outcomes.

(see appendix I)

The final framework resulted in a clear indication of the opportunities and the areas to be addressed within the structure of development for each participant as well as the collective group. It proposes two levels, one to utilize all aspects of internal opportunities and the other level to be facilitated through the institution of Deakin Australia. It would embrace recognition of prior learning and would

include some formal studies undertaken at the close of the program. The framework has been so enthusiastically embraced that the Department of Emergency Services (DES) of which the QFRA is a major partner has sought to include the initiative into the whole of department executive. This has been endorsed as being an enhancement to the program through providing stronger ownership and partnering throughout the department executive.

(see appendix D)

The selection of the educational institution of Deakin Australia as the partner with the QFRA and now also the DES followed a five selection criteria evaluation. The submissions from the parties were assessed against the criteria and weighting as follows:-

No	Criteria	Weighting
1	Tertiary provider's experience in similar work	20%
2	Tertiary provider's track record in similar work	20%
3	Management Skills and Curricula	20%
4	Price	25%
5	Time performance	15%

Methodology for the selection of the Partner.

1. Five selection criteria were identified in the consultancy brief provided to potential tenderers.

The committee allocated a weighting (expressed as a percentage) to each criteria to indicate its relative importance, prior to the assessment of the submissions.
2. The committee met to conduct a preliminary assessment of the submissions received from Deakin and Bond Universities on 18 September 1997.
3. The committee decided that personal presentations from both tenderers was appropriate. These presentations were conducted on Friday 3 October 1997. Both tenderers were given ample time to present their submissions and panel members clarified a number of issues. An assessment summary for each tenderer was prepared and scores were allocated against each selection criterion, together with an overall score for each tenderer.
4. Referee checks were conducted. Referees for Deakin were Westpac and Qantas, which had previously contracted with Deakin to supply executive development programs.
5. As a consequence of the abovementioned assessment, the steering committee decided that the Deakin submission demonstrated the highest level of merit overall.

The committee recommended that Deakin Australia provide the executive Leadership Consultancy to the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority.

Discussion

In looking to resolve the question of finding the leadership executive development program for the new team, many other aspects of criteria could have been included. However those included provided sufficient foundation and framework for identifying the needs and the structure of the program. The program was based on the focus and issues identified in the organizational analysis (staib report) providing the objectives and identifying the organizational ethos to be adopted. These findings reflected the perplexity facing many organizations regularly and is often reported in articles of many business periodicals and text books.

It was clearly the intricacy of the matters facing the settlement of this issue which identified a need to draw a line in finding this solution for this organization of the QFRA. Having close involvement in the analysis, I was able to have a clear picture of what I believed was valuable to the process. I believe that this was fundamental to the solution and therefore it was revealed that there must be a clear interpretation and understanding of the organizational culture, its' beliefs, history and nature. The 'culture' is fundamental to the change process and I am satisfied at this time that knowing the inner aspects and personal needs of change for the people involved will reveal the issues of focus for the successful change process. Just changing structure or removing people or processes will not bring the transitional elements needed for major reform. Having a clear understanding of the need for change must be determined, articulated and documented before embarking on reform. The basis must be behavioral and although difficult to define and resolve, it will be fundamental to organizational change.

The results have major complex considerations for the QFRA and are the basis for inclusion in the organizational transformation. The leadership development program is but one aspect in the development of the change and transitional arrangement. This is apart from the day to day strategies being applied in line with the philosophy of the QFRA and the preferred future of the staff and management. The philosophy birthed in the Staib Report is to develop a business culture having people as it foundation of service both inter-organization and intra-organization.

Recommendations

- The framework proposal be adopted and implemented to progress the shift in behavior and philosophy of the new Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority, (Australia).
- a project manager be engaged to co-ordinate the implementation of the framework and evaluation process.
- That a comprehensive leadership development program be adopted for the QFRA to meet the following objectives :-
 - a. To include a concept of change for individual behavior for genuine shift in organizational focus.
 - b. To facilitate and compliment the objectives of the organizational process to the QFRA.
 - c. To include a development method of 'action learning' as a tool of continuous improvement and skill development.
 - d. To facilitate bench marking for each of the participants as a method of evaluation for progress and standard setting.
 - e. To facilitate accreditation with a recognized institution for program validate, valued ownership and motivation.
 - f. To facilitate transferability to management teams throughout the organization to foster organizational cultural shift and a learning ethos for the QFRA.
- That Deakin University (Victoria, Australia) be formalized in the partnership arrangement with the QFRA as best practice development in Australia.

- That Deakin University engage to facilitate the accreditation process and widening of the skills opportunity and mix with the broader commercial environment.
- Adopt as wider scope as possible and flexibility in delivery of training and skills development to meet the needs of busy scheduled participants.

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